Synopsis

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST MIND-BODY DUALISM

Abida sultana

INTRODUCTION:

Philosophy of Mind is a branch of Philosophy thatdiscusses, among other things, about the nature of the mind,mental events,mental properties,consciousness and their relationship to the physical body,particularly the brain.The mind-bodyproblem,i.e. the problem of explaining the nature of the relationship betweenthe mind and the body,is commonly seen as one of the key issues in Philosophy of Mind. Of course there are other issues concerning the nature of the mind that do not involve its relation to the physical body,such as how consciousness is possible. Dualism and monism are the two major schools of thought that attempt to resolve the mind-body problem.

AIM OF THIS STUDY:

Before studying Philosophy the term 'mind' did not raise any problem for me. But when I started studying Philosophy of Mind I found that there are many theories that sought to deny the existence of mind as a separate entity. Before reading these theories I had no doubt about mind's existence. The idea I have about mind as an entity was somewhat similar to the Cartesian concept of mind. However, most of the theories which I read in Philosophy of Mind arematerialistic theoriesthat question the independent existence of mind. But I had a special interest for dualism. So I wanted to know more about dualism and the

objections often raised against dualism. I found that some recent philosophers such as William G. Lycan, Craig, Moreland and others argue that the standard objections against dualism are not strong enough. I also found somerecent experimental evidence in favor of the dualist position. The present philosophical study is thus an attempt to evaluate the objections often advanced against dualism. Philosophers have presented several arguments against dualism. Two standard objections among those are: 1) the problem of mind-body interaction 2) the argument from Evolutionary history.

At first I will present these two objections and then, drawing on recent theoretical experimental research, I will try to show where the weakness of these objections lies.

METHODOLOGY:

The methodology that will be adopted in the present study is as follows:

1) A critical analysis of the arguments of the old and recent scholars on dualism.
2) A careful interpretation of the experimental works that aim to discover if minds exist.
3) Developing hypotheses on the basis of the analysis of the relevant theoretical and experimental research as mentioned above.

The theory which states that physical states/events are the properties of physical object or matter and the mentalstates/events are the properties of mind generally called Dualism. This theory suggests that the essential nature of conscious intelligence resides in something nonphysical,in something forever beyond the scope of the sciences like physics,neurophysiology and computer science. It is the most common theory of mind in the public at large. It is deeply entrenched in most of the world's popular religions and it has been the dominant theory in the tradition of western philosophy.

Mind-body dualism can be traced back to Plato.Plato believed that the true substances are not physical bodies, which are ephemeral, but the eternal Forms of which bodies are imperfect copies. These Forms not only make the world possible, they also make it intelligible, because they perform the role of universals. It is their connection with intelligibility that is relevant to the philosophy of mind. As Forms are the grounds of intelligibility, they are what the intellect must grasp in the process of understanding. In *Phaedo* Plato presents a variety of arguments for the immortality of the soul, but the one that is relevant for our purposes is that the intellect is immaterial because Forms are immaterial and intellect must have an affinity with the Forms it apprehends (78b4–84b8). This affinity is so strong that the soul strives to leave the body in which it is imprisoned and to dwell in the realm of Forms. It may take many reincarnations before this is achieved. Plato's

dualism is not, therefore, simply a doctrine in the philosophy of mind, but an integral part of his whole metaphysics.

One problem with Plato's dualism was that, though he speaks of the soul as imprisoned in the body, there is no clear account of what binds a particular soul to a particular body. Their difference in nature makes the union a mystery.The said difference was most precisely formulated by Rene' Descartes in the 17th century.

There are two main branches of Dualism:Substance dualism and Property dualism.The view of Substance dualism is each mind is a distinct nonphysical thing, an individual "Package "of nonphysical substance, a thing whose identity is independent of any physical body to which it may be temporarily attached.

Substance dualism is the view for which Descartes is most famous. Descartes theorized that reality divides into two basic kinds of substance. The first is ordinary matter and the essential feature of this kind of substance is that it is extended in space and another substance is mind that has no spatial extension whose essential feature is the activity of thinking. Descartes had more than one argument for the substance dualism and one of those is 'separability argument' from his Sixth Meditation:

"First, I know that everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it. Hence the fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from

another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated, at least by God. The question of what kind of power is require to bring about such a separation does not affect the judgment that the two things are distinct. Thus, simply by knowing that I exist and seeing at the same time that absolutely nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing, I can infer correctly that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing. It is true that I may have (or, to anticipate, that I certainly have) a body that is very closely joined to me. But nevertheless, on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it."

Property dualism claims that there is no substance to be dealt with here beyond the physical brain, the brain has a special set of properties possessed by no other kind of physical object. It is these special properties that are nonphysical: hence the term property dualism. They are held to be nonphysical in the sense that they cannot ever be reduced to or explained solely in terms of the concepts of the familiar physical science. They will require a wholly new and autonomous science- the 'science of mental phenomena'- if they are ever to be adequately understood.

From here, important difference among the positions emerges. Let us being with what is perhaps the oldest version of property dualism: epiphenomenalism. This term is rather a mouthful, but its meaning is simple. The Greek prefix "epi"- means "above", and the position at issue holds that mental phenomena are not a part of the physical phenomena in the brain that ultimately determine our action and behavior, but rather ride 'above the fray'. Mental phenomena are thus epiphenomena. They are held to just appear or emerge when the growing brain passes a certain level of complexity.

But there is more. The epiphenomenalist holds that while mental phenomena are caused to occur by the various activities of the brain, they do not have any causal effect in turn. They are entirely impotent with respect to causal effects on the physical world. They are mere epiphenomena. This means that the universal conviction that one's actions are determined by one's desires, decisions, and volitions is false! One's actions are exhaustively determined by physical events in the brain, which events also cause the epiphenomena we call desires, decisions, and volitions. There is therefore a constant conjunction between volition and actions. But according to the epiphenomenalist, it is mere illusion that the former cause the latter.

The epiphenomenalist's 'demotion' of mental properties- to causally impotent by-products of brain activity- has seemed too extreme for most property dualists, and a theory closer to the

convictions of common sense has enjoyed somewhat greater popularity. This view, which may call integrationists property dualism, differ from the previous view in only one essential respect: the integrationists asserts that mental properties do indeed have causal effect on the brain, and thereby, on behavior. The mental properties of the brain are an integrated part of the general causal fray, in systematic interaction with the brain's physical properties. One's actions therefore are held to be caused by one's desires and volitions after all.

As before, mental propertiesare here said to be emergent properties, properties that do not appear at all until ordinary physical matter has managed to organize itself, through the evolutionary process, into a system of sufficient complexity. Examples of properties that are emergent in this sense would be the property of being solid, the property of being colored, and the property of being alive. All of these require matter to be suitably organized before they can be displayed. With this much, any materialist will agree. But any property dualist makes the further claim that mental states and properties are irreducible, in the sense that they are not just organizational features of physical matter, as are the examples cited. They are said to be novel properties beyond prediction or explanation by physical science.

This last condition- the irreducibility of mental properties- is an important one, since this is what makes the position a dualist position. But it sits poorly with the joint claim that

mental properties emerge from nothing more than the organizational achievements of physical matter. If that is how mental properties are produced, then one would expect a physical account of them to be possible. The simultaneous claim of evolutionary emergence and physical irreducibility is prima facie puzzling.

Substance dualism agreed that there are to independent entities one is matter and another is mind. Human being is the combination of material body and immaterial mind. We also see that our mental events are the cause of our bodily events and our bodily events effect our mental events. Now the question is how anything in the body cause anything in the mind? And how anything in the mind cause anything in the body? Because they are totally different. One is completely material and another is completely immaterial. What is the relation between mind and body? This is the most famous problem and it's usually called mind-body problem. Substance dualist Descartes said that there is a causal relation between mind and body. But how is this utterly insubstantial 'thinking substance' to have any influence on ponderous matter? How can two such different things be in any short of causal contact?

But some philosophers point out,a tack can be moved by a magnetic field, and gravity acts on a planet millions of miles away. Gravitational forces and magnetic fields appear to have very different properties to the solid and spatially located entities they affect, and although we may not understand

"how" such interaction takes place, it nonetheless does –just as we are alert to causation between the mind and body.

Second defense in that the question of "how" the mind interacts with the body may not even arise. One can ask how turning the key starts a car because there is an intermediate electrical system between the key and car's running engine that is the means by which turning the key cause the engine start. The "how" question is a request to describe that intermediate mechanism. But the interaction between mind and body may, and most likely is direct and immediate.

If the interaction is direct and immediate then there is no reason to assume there is an intermediate mechanism that facilitates the interaction.

Another defense is entirely nonspatial mental events could not possibly cause physical motion in the way that billiard balls cause physical motion.

William G.Lycan said that no one has ever believed that mental events do cause physical motion in the way that billiard balls do. What, then, is the problem? It is true that the lack of a good model is a trenchant objection and not just a prejudice.That we have no good theory of causality itself. The theories that have been called theories 'of causality' often seem to have been theories of different things, not of a single phenomenon with agreed-upon clear cases.Though there is as yet no model for Cartesian interaction, microphysics gets more and more bizarre, and indeed itself resorts (on some

interpretations of quantum mechanics) to quasi-mental vocabulary. We cannot possibly be sure that no model for Cartesian interaction will emerge.

The big problem for interaction is and remains the utter non-spatiality of Cartesian egos. William G.Lycan suggested thatdualist give up non-spatiality. Descartes had his own 17th-century metaphysical reasons for insisting that minds are entirely nonspatial, but we need not accept those. Why not suppose that minds are located where it feels as if they are located, in the head behind the eyes? If it be protested that our heads are already entirely full of physical stuff and that two things cannot occupy the same region of space at the same time: (1) Immaterial minds are not physical. And what is true is only that two physical things cannot occupy the same region of space at the same time. For that matter, (2) our heads are not entirely full of physical stuff. Physically, they are mostly empty space, with minuscule particles zipping through them at very high speeds.

Another most important objection is evolutionary theory. This theory embarrasses dualism, since we have no idea how natural selection could have produced Cartesian egos; an immaterial substance could not possibly be adaptive.

At least as stated, the objection is that natural selection could not have produced Cartesian egos because they could not be adaptive. A trait or entity could not emerge in the course of evolution by natural selection unless it, itself, were adaptive.

No evolutionary biologist believes that. Frank Jackson [1982] points out on behalf of epiphenomenalism that many un- or maladaptive traits are concomitants or byproducts of other traits that were adaptive.

Lycan said thatChurchland's version of the evolution objection does not specifically appeal to adaptiveness. What he says is, rather:

"For purposes of our discussion, the important point about the standard evolutionary story is that the human species and all of its features are the wholly physical outcome of a purely physical process .Like all but the simplest of organism we have a nervous system. For the same reason: a nervous system permits the discriminative guidance of behavior. But a nervous system is just an active matrix of cells and a cell is just an active matrix of molecules.We are notable only in that our nervous system is more complex and powerful than those of our fellow creatures. Our inner nature differs from that of simpler creatures in degree, but not in kind."

This simply and blatantly begs the question.

Since question-begging is such an elementary and easily identifiable fallacy, lycan wonders why do seasoned professionals commit it so often? He believes the answer is a more general fact: that we accept deductive arguments mainly when we already believe their conclusions.

Many scientists may accept biological evolution as a fact despite its mechanism not being fully understood or settled upon. The 'origin of life' continues to remain a mystery. As best-selling author and natural Philosopher PaulDavies writes: when I set out to write this book, I was convinced that science was close to wrapping up the mystery of life's origins. Having spent a year or two researching the field, I am now of the opinion that there remains a huge gulf in our understanding is not merely ignorance about certain technical details, it is a major conceptual lacuna.

Yet; placing talks of biological origins aside, consider this evolutionary argument framed in the modusponensform:

1. If we are the result of naturalistic evolutionary processes, then physicalismis true.
2. Humans are merely the result of naturalistic evolutionary processes.
3. Therefore physicalism is true.

Despite differing words, physicalism is assumed for both sides in the first premise, which clearly begs the question. Yet the dualist could turn the argument around to be more favourable:

1. If we are the result of naturalistic evolutionary processes, then physicalism is true.

2. Physicalism is not true.

3. Therefore, we are not the result of natural evolutionary processes.

Now we will see some experimental evidence for substance dualism:

Dr. Wilder Penfield was known for his ground-breaking work with epilepsy. His work involved stimulating brain tissue in conscious patients in order to find the causes of epilepsy. During these sessions Penfield found that the prodding of certain areas of the brain triggered vivid memories of past events. The patients reported remembering clearly such things as the taste of coffee. One patient, while on an operating table in Montreal, Canada, remembered laughing with cousins on a farm in South Africa. What amazed Penfield was that his patients, who were not under anesthetic, were simultaneously conscious of the re-experienced memories and of being prodded by an electrode in an operating room. Penfield called this a "double consciousness" wherein a memory was stimulated physically but was attended to and recognized as a memory by a conscious patient. Penfield likened this to the patient watching a television program while remaining aware that it wasn't now happening.

Penfield repeated these results on hundreds of epileptic patients and concluded that a separable mind was able to track what the brain was doing as a result of the artificial stimulation. One's mind in a sense could transcend the operations of the

brain, monitoring memories without actually placing oneself in the situation remembered. Penfield noted that "The mind of the patient was as independent of the reflex action as was the mind of the surgeon who listened and strove to understand. Thus, my argument favors independence of mind-action." Penfield also stated that if we liken the brain to a computer, it is not that we are a computer, but that we have a computer.

Penfield, who began his research as a materialist, switched to dualism after extensive research with epileptic patients. He said, "Something else finds its dwelling place between the sensory complex and the motor mechanism. . . . There is a switchboard operator as well as a switchboard."

Although nonepileptic patients do not respond similarly to brain stimulation, other researchers, such as Sir John Eccles, a neurobiologist, have similarly concluded that the brain alone cannot account for many phenomena. Eccles' hypothesis is that the self-conscious mind is an independent entity that is actively engaged in reading from the multitude of active centers in the modules of the liaison areas of the dominant cerebral hemisphere. The self-conscious mind selects from these centers in accord with its attention and its interests and integrates its selection to give unity of conscious experience from moment to moment.

Thus, Eccles' conclusions agree with Penfield's, and his areas of research extend farther than that of epileptic patients. Eccles deems the "monist materialist" hope for an eventual

physical explanation for mental events as wrongheaded in principle because mental events are not "simply derivative of aspects of nerve endings. There is no evidence for this whatever." Further, Eccles argues that his "strong dualist-interactionist hypothesis . . . has the recommendation of its great explanatory power. It gives in principle at least explanations of the whole range of problems relating to brain-mind interaction."Eccles notes that it has been impossible to develop a materialist explanation of "how a diversity of brain events come to be synthesized so that there is a unified conscious experience of a global or gestalt character." Given this impasse, Eccles proposed that "the self-conscious mind" serve to integrate the apparently disparate brain processes into a unified consciousness.

CHAPTERIZATION

1. Introduction: An overview of different forms of Mind-Body Dualism.

2. A Critical study of the arguments against Substance Dualism.

3. A Critical study of the arguments against Property Dualism.

4. A Critical study of the arguments against other forms of Dualism.

5. A review of recent empirical research on Mind-Body Dualism.

6. Conclusion.

REFERENCES

1) Churchland, Paul 1984. *Matter and consciousness,* Cambridge: MIT press.

2) Cockburn, David 2001. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, palgrave Macmillan.

3) Descartes, R. (1641 / 1996): 'Meditation VI', in Meditations on the First Philosophy, J. Cottingham (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4) Eccles, J. (1980): The Human Psyche, Springer, New York.

5) Groothuis, Douglas 11.7.2011. *Some argument for substance dualism, and one objection,* WINTERY KNIGHT.

6) Lowe, E.J. 2000.*An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*isbn no: 9780521654289.

7) Lycan, William G 11.9.2009. *Giving dualism its due,* Australasian journal of philosophy, volume 87, issue 4, 2009.

8) Mehta N. Mind-body Dualism: A critique from a health perspective. Mens Sana Monogr. 2011;9:202–9.

9) Plato, Phaedo in J. Cooper (ed.) Plato: Complete Works, pp. 49–100, Indianapolis: Hackett

10) Rodriguez-Pereyra, Gonzalo 2008. *Descartes's substance dualism and his independence conception of substance,* Journal of history of philosophy, volume 46, number 1.

11) Searle, John R 2004. Mind-A brief introduction, Oxford UK: Oxford university press.

12) Zimmerman, D. W. (2004): 'Should a Christian be a mind-body dualist?'. In Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion, Blackwell, Malden MA